

Copy of letter of Dec. 9, 1933 to C. N. Waldron from William Dewey '27

ORSON SPENCER
1824

38 S. 15th Avenue
Mt. Vernon, N. Y.
Dec. 9, 1933

Dear Charlie:

For the last month or so I have been preparing a paper to be read to the Bronx Coin Club next week concerning the history of the Kirtland Safety Society Bank of Kirtland, Ohio. This organization represents one of the many exploits in the early life of the Mormon people of this country, and I have had to read up on the history of Mormonism and its founder, Joseph Smith, in order to get a background for a numismatic talk. In connection with the reading, I ran across the following article in Evans' book "Joseph Smith, an American Prophet" which may be of interest to the College since it involves one of our earlier alumni. Quotation from p. 157:

"ORSON SPENCER, who embraced Mormonism during this Nauvoo period, was a man of culture and education. Born in the Bay State in 1802, he trained for the ministry. At fifteen, he showed such promise in the local school that a friend of the family sent him to Union College, in Schenectady, where he was graduated with distinction at twenty-two. After teaching school for a time in Georgia, he entered a theological college in Hamilton, N. Y., from which he obtained a master's degree in 1829. Becoming a Baptist preacher, he soon rose to prominence in New England. His conversion to Mormonism created an even greater sensation among Baptists than had the conversion of Sidney Rigdon among the Campbellites. On coming to Nauvoo he was made chancellor of the University there".

I thought this article might be of sufficient interest to add to the Unioniana collection.

With kindest regards,

(signed) Bill Dewey '27

ORSON SPENCER

- Union College - Class 1824 -

SPENCER, ORSON, president of the St. Louis Stake of Zion, was the son of Daniel and Chloe Spencer, and was born March 14, 1802, in the town of West Stockbridge, Berkshire county, Massachusetts. His parents belonged to that virtuous, industrious class of New Englanders of the Puritan stock, which has produced so many eminent men to figure on the stage of action in all the various departments of life. At the age of twelve years he was taken ill, and little or no hopes were entertained of saving his life for some two weeks. This sickness occasioned a fever sore in one of his legs, which was the cause of its imperfect development. In 1817 he entered the Academy at the town of Lenox, in his native county, where he received the highest honors of his class. Here, at a public examination, the high sheriff of the county, Henry C. Brown, noticed his unusual proficiency, and ascertaining that his father was in very moderate circumstances, voluntarily offered to loan the necessary means for his education, and wait until he could pay it after its completion. He entered Union College, at Schenectady, State of New York, in 1819, and graduated with great honor and credit to himself in 1824. In 1825, he obtained a situation as teacher in an academy, in the town of Washington, Wilkes county, State of Georgia. Here, in addition to the duties of his calling, he turned his attention to the study of law. About this time he had some singular manifestations on the subject of religion, and soon after, either at Washington, or on his return home in 1827, joined the Baptist Church. He now changed his mind with regard to a future profession, and left the study of the law for that of theology. He accordingly, the same year, entered the theological college at Hamilton, State of New York, where he graduated in 1829. After this he labored in the ministry about twelve years in his native county, and in Connecticut. He received the gospel in 1841, from his brother Daniel, who baptized him in the spring of that year. Soon after his baptism, he bid adieu to a numerous circle of acquaintances and friends, and cast his lot with the persecuted people of God at Nauvoo. Here he was soon called to act his part in those scenes of scathing trial and affliction which are recorded in the archives of eternity, with the blood of innocence as a testimony against this generation. He for some time ably filled the office of alderman in the city of Nauvoo, and when the Saints were driven from that beautiful monument of their peaceful industry and virtues, he, with his wife and little ones, shared their fate and participated in the sufferings of that memorable winter, in which the Saints were driven over the bleak prairies of Iowa, to find a home among prowling savages, who were less ferocious than the Christian mobs of Illinois. How many a pang of sorrow even at this late day throbs in the bosoms of the living, when vivid recollection calls up before the mind the husbands and fathers, the wives and children that were sacrificed in that memorable exodus, to appease the fury of blood-thirsty mobs. Mrs. Spencer, an accomplished and refined lady, sunk under the accumulated sufferings of the journey, and left Elder Spencer to pursue his way with a solitary heart and a family of six small children, all under thirteenth years of age. In the midst of this trying scene, having been appointed on a mission to England, he left his children in the care of friends, and started on his journey to Europe, landing in Liverpool Jan. 23, 1847. He presided over the British mission, and ably edited the "Millennial Star," about two years. During his ministry there, he wrote the most of a series of letters to the Rev. Mr. Crowel, which were embodied and published as Spencer's Letters. He left Liverpool for the United States, in 1849, and gathered to Great Salt Lake valley the same year. When the University of Deseret was founded in 1850, he was appointed its chancellor, which position he occupied at the time of his death. He was a judicious, discriminating man,

a wise counselor, and occupied an honorable position in the legislative council of Utah Territory on its first organization. In 1852 he was again appointed on a mission to Europe. In his travels he visited the kingdom of Prussia, with a view of introducing the gospel there, but was rejected and expelled from the kingdom. He returned again to Utah in 1853. In 1854 he was called upon to perform a mission to the United States. He spent most of his time in Cincinnati, until July, 1855, when he was requested by Pres. Erastus Snow to occupy the editorial chair of the "St. Louis Luminary." He arrived in St. Louis, Missouri, on the 7th of July. Here he remained but a short time, as he was called upon to go on a mission to the Cherokee Nation. He left St. Louis on the 21st of July for the camp of emigrating Saints near Atchison, where he remained until the last company of the outfitting Saints had started for Utah. On the 5th of August, accompanied by Elder James McGaw, he proceeded on his mission to the Cherokee Nation, where he remained until attacked with chills and fever. His mission being accomplished, he immediately returned to St. Louis, arriving there Sept. 17th, sick, and in a debilitated condition. After an illness of forty days he died at St. Louis Oct. 15, 1855. At the time of his demise the following was published in the "Millennial Star:" "Orson Spencer's honesty of heart, sterling integrity, and determination of purpose were forcibly manifest in his embracing the truth for the love of it, forsaking an enviable position in society, and an extensive circle of influential acquaintances and friends, and cleaving to a persecuted and down-trodden people for the gospel's sake. These characteristics have marked his entire career in this Church. Always willing and ever ready, he never failed to be at the post of duty, and fulfil the requirements made on him. He bore trial and affliction with the most unflinching fortitude. Knowing that he was right, with him consequences were no consideration. He needs no praise, no eulogy, to embalm his name to preserve it from oblivion. It is written in the Lamb's Book of Life--indelibly inscribed in the hearts of his brethren, and his generations will become as innumerable as the stars of heaven, for the Lord will have them in remembrance before Him. The crowning act of his life was administering the gospel to one of the nations of Israel. He could not leave this stage of action without doing a deed that would witness that he loved these remnants of Jacob, and longed for their redemption. Death has sealed up his testimony to them and this generation. His body sleeps for a little season only, while his spirit labors with Joseph and Hyrum, Willard and others of the faithful who have gone before him to prepare a counterpart in the spirit world to the great work that is being done in this, that both may be blended in one in the day when all things are perfected." ("Millennial Star," Vol. 17, p. 762.)

(L. D. S. Biographical Encyclopedia Vol. 1, p. 337-339)

Note - Despite Spencer's Education and ability & all that is said of him in above - he never attained any Church prominence as Apgett & q. His University Chancellorship was an affair beyond the Church. There was some distrust of him - probably due to his previous connection with his Evangelical standing in the Christian Church. W. H. P. Dailey

Sent in by
W. N. P. DAILEY
POTTERSVILLE, N. Y.
26 Nov 1884
7.12.1945

Union College - Class 1824 -

SPENCER, ORSON (son of Daniel Spencer and Chloe Wilson).
Born March 14, 1802, West Stockbridge, Berkshire county,
Mass. Came to Utah 1849, captain of his company.

Married Catherine Curtis April 13, 1830 (daughter of
Samuel Curtis and Patience Smith, latter died March 12,
1846, Indian Creek, Keosauqua, Iowa). She was born March
21, 1811. Their children: ¹Catherine b. Oct. 6, 1831;
²Ellen b. Nov. 21, 1832, m. Hiram B. Clawson March 18, 1850;
³Aurelia b. Oct. 4, 1834, m. Thomas Rogers March 27, 1851;
⁴Catherine b. Oct. 2, 1836, m. Brigham Young, Jr., Nov. 15,
1855; ⁵Howard Orson b. June 16, 1838, m. Louise Cross April,
1860; ⁶George Boardman b. Feb. 21, 1840, m. Leonora T. Horne
Nov. 10, 1867; ⁷Lucy b. Oct. 9, 1842, m. George W. Grant
Jan. 2, 1867; ⁸Chloe b. July 26, 1844.

Orson Spencer Married Martha Knight. Their children: Martha Emma
b. Jan. 30, 1848, m. Samuel Woodward; Albert James b.
June 24, 1850; William Collinson b. Dec. 10, 1851, d. aged
1; June Knight b. June 28, 1854, m. Ellsworth Daggett.

" ? - Married Jane Davis. Their child: Luna Spencer b. Dec.
6, 1856, m. Levin Simons 1873. Family resided West Stock-
bridge and Middlefield, Mass., Nauvoo, Ill., and other
places.

Missionary to Great Britain 1848; to Prussia 1852; to
United States 1854. Chancellor University of Deseret 1850.
Died Oct. 15, 1855, St. Louis, Mo.

(Pioneers and Prominent Men of Utah, p. 1178)

∴ No date given - no Jane Davis marriage -

3/50

Union 1824

From Program of 100th Anniversary of the
founding of the University of Utah.

ORSON SPENCER



was born in Massachusetts on March 14, 1802. He received his education for the Baptist ministry at Lennox Academy and Union College in New York. A convert to the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints as a young man, he became a member of the faculty of Nauvoo University, head of the British Mission of the Church and later captain of an emigrating company which arrived in the Salt Lake valley in September 1849. In February of the

next year, he was appointed as the first chancellor of the University of Deseret. He was elected to the first legislative assembly of the state and represented Salt Lake County. He died August 1855 at the age of fifty-three.

Spencer Orson
Mormon elder, author of Mormon books 1824

24
1824
1167 **Spencer** (Orson) Correspondence between Rev. W. Crowell, A.M.,
and O. Spencer, B.A., 8vo., 12 pp., sewn, as issued, £1 1s *Liverpool, c. 1843*

These letters were written, in support of the Mormon Faith, from Nauvoo.

uclaf1824spencer-0-0007

He was a graduate of Union College and the Baptist Theological Seminary in New York. He was Professor of Languages in the university formed by the Mormons.

p. 242

In an address in the Tabernacle, while Capt. Willie's party was approaching the city, he (Brigham Young) told the returned missionaries from England that they needed to be careful about eulogizing Richards and Spencer, lest they should have "the big head." When the men were in Salt Lake City, he cursed them with the curse of the church.

In late years, the editor of the Utah Magazine proposed "to tell the facts about that matter;" but when Young learned this, he ordered Godbe, the controlling editor of the magazine, to destroy that issue, after one side of the sheets had been printed, and he was obeyed.

p. 426

The Story of the Mormons
William Alexander Linn
The MacMillan Co.
New York 1902.

1824 ORSON SPENCER

Orson Spencer, who embraced Mormonism during this Nauvoo period, was a man of culture and education. Born in the Bay State in 1802, he trained for the ministry. At 15 he showed such promise in the local school that a friend of the family sent him to Union College, in Schenectady, where he was graduated with distinction at 22. After teaching school for a time in Georgia, he entered a theological college in Hamilton, New York, from which he obtained a master's degree in 1829. Becoming a Baptist preacher, he soon rose into prominence in New England. His conversion to Mormonism created an even greater sensation among Baptists than had the conversion of Sidney Rigdon among the Campbellites. On coming to Nauvoo he was made chancellor of the university there.

Joseph Smith; An American Prophet
p. 157
John Henry Evans
The MacMillan Co.
New York 1933.

CLASS OF 1824

ORSON SPENCER

Graduated in 1829.

Became pastor of the Third Church in Saybrook, (Deep River), Conn.; and a few months of Second Church in Danbury, Conn., 1835; then Middlefield, Mass.; afterwards a leading man among the Mormons. "His ministry here (Danbury) was unusually faithful, he was blameless in the private and public relations of life. His defection should, in the judgment of charity, be, in part at least, attributed to a morbid mental condition." History of the Church in Danbury.

Jubilee Volume p. 215
Madison Univ.
1872.

Rev. ORSON SPENCER, 1824, of West Stockbridge, Mass., was a member of the Philomathean Society. (Died: 1855)
Philomathean Catalogue 1830

CLASS OF 1824

ORSON SPENCER

Orson Spencer, graduate of Union College, and Baptist
Theological Seminary in New York.
Professor of Languages in University of the City of Nauvoo.

"Another church building was the Hall of the Seventies,"
the upper story of which was used for the priesthood and the
Council of Fifty. Gallaud's suggestion about a college
received practical shape in the organization of a university,
in whose board of regents the leading men of the church
found places. The faculty consisted of -----, Orson
Spencer."

FROM The Story of the Mormons
William Alexander Linn
The MacMillan Co.
New York 1902.

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Brigham Young "wrote to Orson Spencer, the President of
the Church in Britain: 'While you tarry in England I wish
you would exert yourself to gather up as much tithing as
you possibly can, and bring it with you, in order to prepare
for glass, nails, paints, and such other articles as will
be needed to bring from the States to assist in building
up the Temple of the Lord in the valley of the Great Salt
Lake.' "

FROM The Rocky Mountain Saints p. 266
T. B. H. Stenhouse
D. Appleton & Co.
New York 1873

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Author of Letters exhibiting to most prominent doctrines
of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter Day
Saints---in reply to the Rev. William Crowel.
5th Ed. Salt Lake City
Deseret News Steam Printing
8+252 pp

Patriarchial order; or, Plurality of Wives!
Liverpool
S. W. Richards 1853
16 pp.
(His fifth letter in correspondence with the
Rev. William Crowel)

ORSON SPEICER

The first chancellor of the University of Deseret--now University of Utah--was Orson Spencer; a deathless name, in Mormon annals, if only for its connection with the celebrated "Spencer's Letters;" a doctrinal work that has done distinguished service in the cause. Its author was prominent in the Church from the days of Nauvoo, where he figured as one of the faculty of the University projected by the Prophet Joseph Smith. In Utah he was a member of the first Legislature that convened after the organization of the Territory. Prior to that time he had presided over the British Mission. Gifted as a writer, able as a speaker and eminent as a theologian; a refined and scholarly man; a Baptist minister before his conversion to Mormonism; his "Letters," exegetical of the principles of the faith, are one of the real classics that the Church possesses. His whole heart was in his religion; his sacrifices for its sake were many, and he died while absent from home in the discharge of the sacred duties it imposed upon him.

Orson Spencer was born at West Stockbridge, Berkshire Co., Mass., March 14, 1802. He was next to the youngest of eleven children, and one of twins, the other being a girl. The mother, unable to care for both of the children, gave the little girl into the charge of a nurse, who accidentally killed the babe, by lying upon it while sleeping. At the age of fourteen Orson underwent a severe spell of sickness, which came near costing him his life. While much heated from athletic sports, of which he was very fond, he bathed in cold water, bringing on an attack of typhus fever, from which he did not recover for nine months. Even then he did not entirely recover, for the fever ultimately settled in his right leg, lamming him permanently. At fifteen he was a student at Lenox Academy in his native county, and at twenty-two a graduate with high honors from Union College, in the State of New York. The next year he taught in an academy at Washington, Wilkes County, Georgia, at which time he employed his leisure hours in studying law.

Soon after this he experienced religion, joining the Baptist Church and resolving to prepare himself for the ministry. With this end in view he entered the Theological College at Hamilton, New York, graduating thence in 1829. On the thirteenth of April, 1830, he married Catherine Curtis, daughter of Deacon Samuel Curtis, of Canaan county, in that State. He now moved to Saybrook, Connecticut, where he had been called to labor in the ministry. While living there two children were born to him, Catherine, the eldest, dying when two years old, and Ellen Curtis, the younger, living to become Mrs. H. B. Clawson, of Salt Lake City. The third child, also a daughter, was born at Deep River, and was named Aurelia. She is now Mrs. Thomas Rogers, of Farmington. Some time after her birth her parents moved into the suburbs of Middlefield, Hampshire county, Mass., where three more children were added to the family: Catherine Curtis, widow of Apostle Brigham Young; Howard O. and George B.; all well known in Utah. Mrs. Aurelia Spencer Rogers, who by the way is the founder of the Latter-Day Saints Primary Associations, has written an interesting sketch of her father's life. In it she tells the story of the family's conversion to

Mormonism--brought to them in the year 1840 by her uncle Daniel Spencer, from West Stockbridge, a day's journey from Middlefield. Says she:

"My parents could not reject the truth, although father held back a little at first, perhaps for the sake of argument. They sat up late every night during the few days my uncle stayed, conversing upon the principles of this new doctrine, which was to make such a change in their lives. One evening my mother said, looking at my father, 'Orson, you know this is true.' He felt to acknowledge it and they both shed tears.

----- Soon after they were both baptized. The next consideration was how to gather with the Saints, who were then settling at Nauvoo, Ills. Father must give up his means of making a livelihood and meet the scorn and derision of his old friends; but once convinced that he was right, nothing could turn him from his purpose. He accordingly took steps to dispose of his private property, in which was a library of choice books. He settled up all business accounts, and in the spring of 1841, started for West Stockbridge, the place of his birth, where his parents still lived. ----- Uncle Hyrum Spencer had also joined the Church. ----- It had been decided by the Spencer brothers that my father should go to Nauvoo first and look out places to locate, while my uncles should stay until they could sell their property, which they did, and emigrated the next year. "

At Nauvoo Orson Spencer taught school, and was one of the faculty, as stated, of the University there projected. In the fall of 1842 he opened a small store, and was occupied in this business until the following spring, when he was elected an alderman of the city. Two more children blessed his home during his residence at Nauvoo, namely, Lucy Curtis, who lived to become Mrs. George W. Grant, and Chloe, who died at thirteen months. The mother, Catherine Curtis Spencer, a most estimable woman, educated and refined, fell a victim to the hardships and exposures of the exodus from Illinois. She died March 12, 1846, at Indian Creek, near Keosauqua, Iowa. Her remains were conveyed to Nauvoo and buried, at night, beside those of her youngest child.

"While a portion of the Saints were camped at Garden Grove," writes Mrs. Rogers, " my Uncle Hyrum Spencer and Uncle Daniel's son, Claudius V., went back to Nauvoo, to try to sell the valuable farms of the Spencer brothers. While returning Uncle Hyrum died before reaching camp and was buried at Mount Pisgah. -----He left eight children by the wife of his youth and two by his then living wife, formerly Miss Emily Thompson, whom he married at Nauvoo. The two sons of Uncle Hyrum's now living are Charles and Hyrum T., the latter Bishop of Pleasant Green, Salt Lake county, Utah. --- Before leaving Nauvoo, father had been called to go on a mission to England, but owing to the persecutions his departure had been postponed. While at the Bluffs, he was notified to be ready to start late in the fall. He therefore made arrangements to fill the appointment, and went with us across the Missouri River to Winter Quarters, where he put up a log cabin, into which we moved before it was finished. --- Catherine and I were just recovering from a spell of sickness, when our father bade us farewell and started on a three years mission, leaving us in charge of a good man and his wife--James

and Mary Bullock, who looked after our interests the same as their own. --- We kept house by ourselves, Ellen acting the part of a little mother."

Elder Spencer had been appointed to edit the "Millennial Star" and preside over the British Mission. He arrived at Liverpool January 23, 1847. A false report of his death had preceded him, and the announcement, with an obituary notice, had been published in the "Star." Moreover, Elder Franklin D. Richards had been summoned from Glasgow to Liverpool, to take charge of the mission, whose president Orson Hyde, was about to return to America. To the great joy of all, Elder Spencer, over whom they had mourned, arrived safe, and forthwith entered zealously upon his labors. He met with much success. In his farewell address to the Saints in Europe, January 1st, 1849, he states that about 10,000 had been added to Christ by baptism during the two previous years. He had been succeeded as president of the mission by Orson Pratt in August, 1848, but had remained in England to recruit his health, which was seriously impaired, prior to undertaking the long journey home. That home was now in Utah, whither his motherless children, left at Winter Quarters, had preceded him, crossing the plains with President Brigham Young in the season of 1848. President Spencer, three months after his arrival in England, had married Martha Knight, of Lancaster, who became the mother of four children,---Martha E., born in England, Albert J., William C. and June Knight, born after the arrival of their parents in Utah. The company of Saints led by him from Liverpool in 1849, suffered severely from cholera while ascending the Missouri River. He reached Salt Lake City late in September.

The Legislature of Deseret, on February 28, 1850, organized a State University, of which Orson Spencer was chosen Chancellor. This was several months before the organization of the Territory of Utah. The University was opened in November of that year, "in Mrs. Pack's house, Seventeenth Ward," Dr. Cyrus Collins, A. M., who was on his way to California, being temporarily engaged to take charge of it. After he retired, Chancellor Spencer assumed the duties of a professor in the institution, assisted by William W. Phelps. In September, 1851, he sat as a member of the council in the first session of the Territorial legislature. About this time he married his third wife, Jane Davis, who bore to him one child, a daughter named Luna. He also had a wife named Margaret Miller, but she had no children.

In the summer of 1852 Orson Spencer, accompanied by Jacob Houtz, started upon a mission to Prussia. They arrived at Berlin on the twenty-fifth of the following January. They were not permitted to preach, and on the second of February were banished from the kingdom. They managed to circulate a few tracts in secret, prior to taking their departure for England, where they labored in the ministry for a short time, before returning to Utah. While at Liverpool, on his way to Berlin, Elder Spencer had written the last of his series of "Letters," most of which had previously been published and passed through several editions. These letters, fifteen in number, the first written at Nauvoo, November 17th, 1842; the next thirteen at Liverpool, between May 15, and December 13, 1847; and the final one on January 30, 1853, were called forth by an epistle from

a Baptist minister, Rev. William Crowel, A. M., editor of the "Christian Watchman," at Boston, Mass. This gentleman had made inquiries of Mr. Spencer, whom he knew at Middlefield, concerning Mormonism and its adherents, asking him as a friend to give an expression his religious views and the reasons that had induced him to change from the Baptist to the Mormon faith. The first letter, in reply, was written under the advice of the Prophet Joseph Smith; the remaining ones under the sanction of President Young. It was the perusal of the opening letter that suggested to Eliza R. Snow the theme of her beautiful poem, "Evening Thoughts, or What it is to be a Saint." "Spencer's Letters" have been the means of converting many to Mormonism. The date of their author's return from his last mission to Europe was August 24, 1853.

His final errand as a minister of the Gospel was undertaken in the summer of the year following, when by appointment of the First Presidency he proceeded to Cincinnati, Ohio, where he labored, until July, 1855. He was then sent for by Apostle Erastus Snow, to take editorial charge of a paper, published by the Latter-Day Saints at St. Louis. He immediately responded to this summons, and was duly installed as editor of the St. Louis "Luminary;" presiding simultaneously over the Latter-Day Saints in the Ohio and Mississippi valleys. His health had not been good for some time, but he suffered uncomplainingly, and entered upon his missionary labors with his old time zeal and devotion. He had not been long in St. Louis when he was commissioned by President Young to visit the Cherokee nation, a mission which he filled in August and September, accompanied by Elder James McGaw. While among the Cherokees he was attacked with chills and fever. He returned at once to St. Louis, where he arrived on the 17th of September, very much fatigued and debilitated. Typhoid fever ensued, and on the fifteenth of October, 1855, he breathed his last period. His remains were temporarily buried at St. Louis, but in the summer of 1856 they were taken up and sent home; the final interment being in the Salt Lake Cemetery.

FROM History of Utah Vol. 4 p. 320
Orson F. Whitney
George Q. Cannon & Sons
Salt Lake City, Utah.
1904.